

Weights and Measures conference

Metric and net weight issues will be highlighted at the **National Bureau of Standards' (NBS) National Conference on Weights and Measures** in Portland, OR from July 22 to 27. For more information write or call Harold Wollin at NBS, Office of Weights and Measures, Washington, DC 20234; telephone 301-921-3677.

consumer news



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Esther Peterson, Director

Vol. 9, No. 12, June 15, 1979

Consumer News ceases publication

Following an extensive review of the consumer information materials currently published by the **US Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA)**, Director Esther Peterson has announced the termination of **CONSUMER NEWS** with this issue.

"While the need for consumer information has perhaps never been greater, we have found that **CONSUMER NEWS** is not the most effective means of reaching the public," Mrs. Peterson said. "In addition, budgetary restraints and increased printing and postage costs would have forced us to substantially increase the subscription fee in the near future. We sincerely appreciate the past support of **CONSUMER NEWS** subscribers and hope they will be even better served by our new efforts."

CONSUMER NEWS subscribers who are due an adjustment on their original paid subscription will soon be contacted by the **Government Printing Office (GPO)**, which will refund the balance of the subscription if the amount exceeds one dollar. This is in keeping with GPO policy, and there is no need to request this refund.

OCA plans to publish the following new publications this year: (1) *Consumer's Resource Handbook*, expected this fall, includes a complaint handling section, a guide to Federal Government consumer services, and a directory of state and local consumer-related offices; (2) *Inflation Action, A Self-Help Guide for Consumer and Citizen Groups*, slated for late fall, features case studies of groups throughout the country conducting successful anti-inflation projects providing traditional marketplace alternatives in food, energy, transportation, housing and health care; and (3) *National Consumer Buying Alert*, available now, includes price and supply information and consumer tips for coping with food, energy, housing and health care inflation. The *Alert* is available free by writing each month to: Esther Peterson, Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009. In addition, plans are underway for a series of consumer columns and public service announcements for local media.

OCA will also communicate regularly with consumer and citizen groups on emerging consumer issues and opportunities to participate in proceedings.

If you wish to be on our mailing list to receive special mailings and publications targeted to your area of interest, please check the appropriate blanks below. Your cooperation will aid us in keeping you informed.

Affiliation

☐ media ☐ consumer organization ☐ citizen group
☐ government agency ☐ government consumer office
☐ library ☐ business ☐ consumer educator
☐ individual consumer

Primary interest

☐ food ☐ energy ☐ housing ☐ health care ☐ credit
☐ insurance ☐ telecommunications ☐ transportation
☐ utilities ☐ general consumer information
☐ public participation ☐ consumer education

Clip and return this form to:

Consumer Information Division
US Office of Consumer Affairs
Washington, DC 20201

Consumer News index: Vol. 9, part 1: Jan. 1, 1979-June 15, 1979

Below is an index to CONSUMER NEWS and its supplement CONSUMER REGISTER for the final issues that were published Jan. 1, 1979 through June 15, 1979.

Date and page of the newsletter are given after each subject. "Life insurance abuses Apr. 1:3" means an item about life insurance abuses appears on page 3 of the April 1, 1979 issue of CONSUMER NEWS. Subjects that appeared in CONSUMER REGISTER are designated by "CR" before date and number. "CR Jun 15:1" means page one of the June 15 issue of CONSUMER REGISTER.

Recalls, warnings and publications are listed only once—under main entries for "recalls," "warnings" and "publications."

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Help for the college-bound

All college students, regardless of family income, can now get financial help from the **US Office of Education** through the Guaranteed Student Loan (GSL) Program.

The family income ceiling (formerly \$25,000) for determining eligibility for Federal GSLs has been removed, thanks to enactment of the Middle Income Student Assistance Act (Public Law 95-566). Therefore, regardless of family adjusted income, any student is now eligible for a GSL. In addition, students are no longer required to answer questions about family income or provide other private information on the application.

To be eligible for a GSL, a student must be enrolled in school at least half time. Repayment on the loan must begin nine to 12 months after leaving school, and the student may usually take from five to 10 years to complete repayment.

For more information about a GSL as well as other financial aid programs, contact the financial aid office at your school, or write: Health, Education and Welfare Dept., Office of Education, Bureau of Student Financial Assistance, Washington, DC 20202. Ask for a copy of *Student Consumer's Guide-Six Federal Financial Aid Programs, 1979-80*. The *Guide* explains all the programs in detail including rights and responsibilities of students, application deadlines, and other sources of information.

Consumers win in antitrust decision

A recent **Supreme Court** decision has reaffirmed the traditional right of consumers to file suits to recover damages for alleged violations of antitrust laws even though the purchased goods are solely for their personal use. The case was reported under the name *Reiter v. Sonotone Corp.*

In January 1978, the **US Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit** ruled that the Clayton Act of 1914 allowed treble damage suits only by persons injured by price-fixing or other anti-competitive activities in their "business or property." A Minneapolis consumer had brought a class action complaint against five hearing aid manufacturers alleging that they had conspired to fix prices. The trial court upheld the consumer's right to sue for damages in the face of a challenge by the defendants. The Court of Appeals rejected the lower court ruling on the basis of an interpretation of the Clayton Act that "business or property" meant "business activity or property related to one's business," thereby excluding an antitrust suit by a retail purchaser.

The Supreme Court, however, reviewed the language of the Clayton Act, noting that it says "any person" injured in his or her business" or property" by reason of "anything" prohibited by the antitrust laws is entitled to sue.

The defendant businesses and the Court of Appeals had suggested that allowance of such consumer class action suits for antitrust damages would substantially add to the congestion of the Federal Court and potentially hurt small businesses. However, the Supreme Court rejected that argument and held that while the consumer "was deprived of only money, albeit a modest amount, [there] is no reason to conclude that she did not sustain a 'property' injury" which entitled her to exercise the right to sue for antitrust violation.

This case is distinguishable from the *Illinois Brick* decision (CONSUMER NEWS: June 1). In that case, the Supreme Court ruled that only *direct* purchasers from alleged antitrust violators could sue for recovery of damages. This is despite the fact that consumers as *indirect* purchasers are often the parties actually injured by antitrust activity through a "pass on" of illegal charges by distributors or intermediate suppliers. In *Reiter*, the status of the consumer as an indirect purchaser was not at issue.

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